

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, EIND, PFOR, IT, LY
SUBJECT: FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER OSSOLA'S VISIT TO LIBYA

1. DURING DECEMBER 13 REVIEW OF RECENT GOI MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC INITIATIVES, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS REP BRIEFLY DISCUSSED FORTHCOMING (DECEMBER 19) VISIT OF GOI MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE OSSOLA TO LIBYA. PURPOSE OF VISIT IS TO SATISFY LARG, WHICH HAS BEEN IMPATIENTLY DEMANDING OFFICIAL VISIT OF SUITABLY HIGH-LEVEL GOI FIGURE. GOL HAS BEEN HINTING THAT UNLESS VISIT TOOK PLACE, WAYS WOULD BE FOUND TO RETALIATE AGAINST ITALIAN BUSINESSMEN. GIVEN IMPORTANCE OF LIBYA AS ITALIAN TRADING PARTNER, GOI FELT IT HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO ACCEDE TO LIBYAN DESIRES. BECUASE, ACCORDING TO MFA REP, "IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME TO SEND EITHER THE PRIME MINISTER (ANDREOTTI) OR FOREIGN MINISTER (FORLANI)," IT WAS DECIDED TO SEND OSSOLA.

2. ALTHOUGH VISIT WILL BE LARGELY CEREMONIAL, MFA REP INDICATED THAT SOME CONTRACTS MAY BE SIGNED. HE DID NOT RPT NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT VISIT OF PM OR FONMIN MAY EVENTUALLY RESULT FROM OSSOLA'S TRIP. GOI ALSO EXPECTS TO BE PRESSURED ON NEED TO BE FORTHCOMING AT CIEC.

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3. SOURCE NOTED THAT VISIT HAS NO CONNECTION WITH
RECENTLY-SIGNED LIBYAN PURCHASE OF FIAT STOCK. THIS WAS
CONFIRMED IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION BY MFT OFFICIAL.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH UNDERTAKEN IN RESPONSE TO
LARG PRESSURES, OSSOLA VISIT IS LOGICAL CONTINUATION OF
ITALIAN PROGRAM (TO BE SUBJECT SEPTTEL) DESIGNED TO IMPROVE
GOI COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH PRINCIPAL OIL-SOURCE COUNTRIES.
BEAUDRY

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